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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 ROME 001992

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EUR FOR PDAS RIES, EUR/ERA, EUR/WE, EUR/RPM

E.O. 12958: DECL: 05/06/2013

TAGS: [PREL](#) [EU](#) [EU](#) [IT](#) [NATO](#) [ITPREL](#) [NATO](#)

SUBJECT: IMPROVING TRANSATLANTIC RELATIONS TOP PRIORITY FOR
ITALY'S EU COUNCIL PRESIDENCY

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CLASSIFIED BY: POL MINISTER COUNSELOR TOM COUNTRYMAN. REASON: 1.5 (B)(D)

11. (C) SUMMARY: DURING A WIDE-RANGING CONVERSATION ON MAY 2 ABOUT THE CURRENT - AND FUTURE - STATE OF US/EU RELATIONS AND PRIORITIES FOR THE UPCOMING ITALIAN EU PRESIDENCY, MFA DIRGEN GIANCARLO ARAGONA TOLD VISITING USEU AMBASSADOR SCHNABEL THAT HE IS OPTIMISTIC ABOUT THE FUTURE OF US/EU RELATIONS. HIS VIEW IS THAT EUROPE'S BIGGEST WORRY IS THAT THE US BECOMES "INDIFFERENT" TOWARDS TRANSATLANTIC RELATIONS. HE ENCOURAGED WASHINGTON TO USE EXCELLENT GOI/USG RELATIONS TO ITS ADVANTAGE DURING THE ITALIAN EU PRESIDENCY. END SUMMARY

12. (C) ARAGONA SAID THAT THE STATE OF TRANSATLANTIC RELATIONS WAS UPPERMOST ON HIS AGENDA RECENTLY, NOTING RECENT PHONE CONVERSATIONS WITH U/S GROSSMAN AND A/S JONES ON JUST THAT SUBJECT; MORE SPECIFICALLY, ON HOW TO USE THE ITALIAN EU PRESIDENCY TO PUT TRANSATLANTIC RELATIONS BACK ON THE RIGHT TRACK. "IT WON'T BE EASY" ADMITTED ARAGONA. ALL EU MEMBER STATES AGREE IN PRINCIPLE THAT RELATIONS BETWEEN AMERICA AND EUROPE CAN'T CONTINUE AS THEY EXIST NOW. BUT HOW, IN PRACTICE, TO ACHIEVE THE OBJECTIVE OF MORE AMICABLE RELATIONS IN THE POLITICAL ARENA IS LESS CLEAR. ARAGONA SUGGESTED STARTING WITH THE AREAS WHERE THE EU AND US ALREADY SHARE COMMON GOALS - A NATO ROLE IN AFGHANISTAN AND IRAQ, FOR EXAMPLE, AND CONCURRENT "LOOSENING" OF NATO'S GEOGRAPHIC FOCUS.

13. (C) AMBASSADOR SCHNABEL OBSERVED THAT THE VIEW AMONG SOME
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IN EUROPE, PARTICULARLY IN FRANCE, WAS THAT THE NEW US POLICY TOWARDS EUROPE IS "DIVIDE AND CONQUER." ARAGONA DISAGREES WITH THIS VIEW. HE OPINED THAT THE TRUE PROBLEM WAS A PERCEPTION AMONG EUROPEANS THAT THERE HAS BEEN A DECREASE IN THE "CENTRALITY" OF EUROPE IN US FOREIGN POLICY PRIORITIES, AN OUTGROWTH OF POST-COLD WAR REALITIES, WHICH HAS CREATED A DISTANCE BETWEEN THE EU AND US. ARAGONA SURMISED THAT THE GREATEST FEAR IN EUROPE WAS NOT GROWING ANTI-EUROPEAN SENTIMENT IN THE US, BUT RATHER "INDIFFERENCE," THE FEAR THAT EUROPE WILL LOSE ITS IMPORTANCE THROUGH "POLITICAL NEGLECT" IN THE US, MAKING IT IMPOSSIBLE FOR RELATIONS TO GET BACK TO NORMAL AFTER AMERICANS OVERCOME THEIR PRESENT RESENTMENT TOWARDS EUROPE.

14. (C) AMB. SCHNABEL OBSERVED THAT THE US/EU SHOULD FOCUS ON TRADE/ECONOMY, AS EACH OTHER'S LARGEST TRADING PARTNERS, WHERE THERE WAS FAR MORE TO AGREE UPON THAN NOT - FOR INSTANCE, ECONOMIC AND TRADE COMPETITION FROM CHINA, WHERE THERE IS FAR LESS OVERHEAD AND REGULATION. ARAGONA AGREED, BUT INSISTED THAT THE POLITICAL FRAMEWORK IS FUNDAMENTAL. CONFLICT MAY BE SEEN AS HEALTHY AND NORMAL WITHIN A PARTNERSHIP, BUT IF THAT PARTNERSHIP WEAKENS, CONFLICT THREATENS ITS EXISTENCE. EACH SIDE MUST ENCOURAGE EUROPEAN GROWTH, BUT NOT AT THE EXPENSE OF THE TRANSATLANTIC ALLIANCE. ITALY HAS A LONG COMMITMENT TO EUROPEAN DEVELOPMENT IN A MANNER THAT PRESERVES AND ENHANCES TRANSATLANTIC RELATIONS. THIS WILL BE A PRIORITY OF THE ITALIAN PRESIDENCY.

15. (C) ARAGONA SAID THAT OVERALL HE WAS OPTIMISTIC ABOUT THE FUTURE, BUT ADMITTED THAT THIS WAS "NOT AN EASY MOMENT" IN EU/US RELATIONS. THE GOI INTENDED TO DO WHAT IT COULD DURING
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ITS PRESIDENCY TO ADDRESS THE SITUATION, AND HE ASKED FOR A STRONG US RESPONSE AND INPUT TO THE PROCESS. HE ENCOURAGED WASHINGTON TO USE EXCELLENT US/ITALIAN BILATERAL RELATIONS TO ITS ADVANTAGE DURING THOSE SIX MONTHS.

16. (C) ON THE CONVENTION/CONSTITUTION, ARAGONA SAID THAT THE GOAL OF ALL EU MEMBER STATES IS TO OPEN THE INTER-GOVERNMENTAL CONFERENCE DURING THE ITALIAN PRESIDENCY, AND TO CLOSE IT AS WELL, BUT ADMITTEDLY TIME IS TIGHT. THE GOI WANTS TO AVOID JUDGING THE SUCCESS OF ITS PRESIDENCY SOLELY ON COMPLETING A CONSTITUTION. EVEN IF DELIBERATIONS CARRY OVER INTO THE IRISH PRESIDENCY, ARAGONA CLAIMED THAT

THERE WERE GROWING SIGNALS FROM OTHER EU MEMBERS THAT THERE COULD STILL BE A SIGNING CEREMONY IN ROME.

17. (C) ARAGONA SAID THAT THE GOI WAS SATISFIED WITH THE CONVENTION DEBATE THUS FAR, BUT THERE WAS SOME ROOM FOR IMPROVEMENT. THE GOI IS STRONGLY COMMITTED TO EUROPEAN INTEGRATION. IT REJECTS DOMESTIC CRITICISM (NOTE: MOSTLY EMANATING FROM THE ITALIAN LEFT AND AIMED AT THE CURRENT GOVERNMENT) THAT EQUATES DEFENDING NATIONAL POSITIONS WITH A WEAKENING COMMITMENT TO EUROPE. NO ONE CRITICIZES FRANCE, THE UK OR GERMANY FOR ASSERTIVE DEFENSE OF THEIR INTERESTS WITHIN THE EU FRAMEWORK. "THIS IS POLITICAL BLACKMAIL," SAID

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ACTION EUR-00

INFO	LOG-00	NP-00	AID-00	CIAE-00	INL-00	DODE-00	SRPP-00
	DS-00	EAP-00	VC-00	TEDE-00	INR-00	IO-00	LAB-01
	L-00	VCE-00	AC-01	NRRC-00	NSAE-00	NSCE-00	OIC-02
	PA-00	PM-00	PRS-00	ACE-00	P-00	SCT-00	SP-00
	SSO-00	SS-00	TRSE-00	T-00	USIE-00	SSD-00	PMB-00
	DSCC-00	PRM-00	DRL-01	G-00	SSR-00	NFAT-00	SAS-00
	/005W						

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O 090727Z MAY 03
FM AMEMBASSY ROME
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 9756
USEU BRUSSELS IMMEDIATE 3219
INFO EU CANDIDATE STATES COLLECTIVE PRIORITY
EU INTEREST COLLECTIVE PRIORITY
EU MEMBER STATES COLLECTIVE PRIORITY
AMCONSUL FLORENCE PRIORITY
AMCONSUL MILAN PRIORITY
AMCONSUL NAPLES PRIORITY

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ARAGONA "WHICH WE WILL NOT ACCEPT."
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